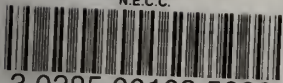


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PARNASSUS



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PARNASSUS

LITERARY MAGAZINE
OF
NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SPRING 1983

*Parnassus is the name of the mythological mountain home
of the nine muses who inspired humankind in the arts.*

STAFF

Jerry Barnhart
Bill Copeland
Carla Corcoran
Charlene Cortes
Chris Daly
Terri Elaine Fowler
Roseanne Krantz
Barbara Noonan

ADVISORS

Eleanor Hope-McCarthy
Bernie Horn
Ann Ott
Cathy Sanderson

The policy of the editorial staff has been to select material for the magazine democratically. We have read each work submitted and viewed all artwork. We voted to determine eligibility: a majority vote for a piece meant publication. Parnassus provides an opportunity for new artists and writers to reach others; it's a showcase of student creativity.

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Cover Photo by J. Eichhorst		



SHAME

How does a simple tongue
speak of delicate words?
The feelings fall like lead
in the pit of the throat,
and leave one breathlessly hung
in attempt to sing the song of a bird
from toils within the head.
Feelings left barren; barely afloat.

The mind knows what is right,
and is aware of the task undone,
but how subtle are the lips un-kissed
and have never bled.
These cannot speak of some night.
All that fear seems to come
when words are missed
and passed between the dead.

The soft hands of a clear nymph
shake from heat of anxiety.
The trials of shame
are enough to desire death.
kiss her and wait for her whence
she may come home or entirely leave.
Desire is an entity untame
and the damned are just a wasted breath.

—Jyne

GROWING PAINS

Women dressed in black veils, covering all but their eyes, following their husbands with their faces to the ground through the open-air markets in the extreme heat. I, who had always tried to fight the fact that I was a girl, was shocked. Is this what it meant to be a woman, to be a piece of property? At the age of twelve, watching these women who had no rights left me with a feeling of dread. I looked to my mother for answers but I noticed that she, too, had taken to the custom of wearing loose clothing and following behind my father.

I rebelled. I wanted to break the mold I was in and become a boy. Instead of covering myself like my mother told me to, I wore shorts and t-shirts like the boys. I ran free beyond the restrictions set by my parents. They demanded, threatened, and pleaded with me to follow the rules. They told me gruesome stories about “other” American children who had been raped, kidnapped, or killed. Thinking that I was immune from this ever happening to me, I paid no attention. That soon changed.

Walking home from the pool took twenty minutes and the sun was hot that day. A man in a car called me over. As I got closer I saw that he was a local. Everything my parents had told me was pushed from my mind.

“Do you know where Mr. (so-and-so) lives?”, he asked me in Pigeon English. “He lives down the street from me,” I said without much interest.

“Maybe I drive you home and you show me?”

I felt a little uneasy about the way he stared at my body in its too small bathing suit and tight shorts, but I accepted his offer anyway. He started to go the wrong way and when I said something, he grabbed both of my hands in his large one and said nothing. I panicked and tried to kick at the door. A friend of my parents saw us drive by and got hold of the security police. They stopped him before he got to the gate of our enclosed compound and took me home.

My mother was waiting for me when they brought me to my door. We held onto each other and cried a lot. We talked about my fears of growing up as a girl. I told her about the things that I had noticed, the changes in her and daddy when they went out. She tried to explain that we were in a foreign country and that we had to follow their rules. I grew up a little that day and learned that there was no way to change what I was. I don’t know what happened to the man who picked me up, but, in a way, I am grateful he did.

WAITING

Something like a butterfly arrived
and perched on my arm
I search the great skys
to see what else they may hold for me
I sense the flush of distant wings
tremulous, waiting for the word to rush in
offering to secure me in the ebb and flow
to surround me with jesters tumbling
head over heels over each other.
My life is a gift I offer
I hold out a sacred object
Let’s hold it together
covered in a delicate grasp.

—Jeani Perrin

—Sheila Klinger

A UNITY

My first physical touch of a pagan's dream,
I found
in some obscure way.
I could not hold on to that and still expect to
join with the human being behind it.
I am unified
alone
by finding you.
And when I still see you from time to time, I
do not need you,
but love you.
For if I needed you, I would deny my own aspect searching for you.
We are too solid and too alone to be as one.
I do not wish you were here or I were there
physically.
It would destroy us as a human does to nature
with his own nature.
Pages of the universe
sent here to relay messages,
physically together we would be an abortive transfiguration
and do nothing for our
Nature
Would scorn us.
I see now
in the strawbed that walls the river stream.
In the mote
and standing in the highest
most outrageous
tree.
we will always be together.
We are a joining circle that closes with time.
I have learned to love all of the things we both love
alone,
and make that love a duty.
I do not rely on your presence.
and wish for you to make me complete.
It is true
that you are the other side of my aspect,
but I'll let the sky cry on me instead of
from within me,
and let the trees tell me
as I sit racing through the pages while
wallowing through the light wind.
Sitting beside the old
crooked fence that
falls into the river.
We are all alone,
but to join with love
physically
would destroy its perfect
unity...

—Carla Corcoran

THE DRIFTER'S BLUES

Maybe, this one time, if I could focus on something different, then the pain wouldn't be so enormous. It's as if every day since it happened, I've been wandering around with a ball and chain tied around my neck and if I ever made one false move, the whole thing would come crashing down on my head. It's all so colorless now. That's what I miss most, the color. All I see is white and grey; there's nothing in the middle. If they had to take away anything, why didn't they leave the color? I get no answers though, so I don't bother to ask questions anymore. It's not worth the trouble. I just don't think the sun will come up today. I always keep a clear head about it, of course, but there doesn't seem to be any chance of it happening now. My toes are frozen, I can't feel anything, and I'm hungry. That's all I know. They used to tell me to believe in God and wait patiently dear, he'll provide. Well, God knows, I've waited and waited and waited and now this. It's just not fair. There's no sense to it. I didn't ask for this. I didn't spend my whole fucking life trapped in a cyclone of indifference — only to end up here. I just want to die now. That's all I ask, It's so simple. Just let me die...

"Come here, young man. Tell me your problems."

That was a voice I remembered. God, it was so many windswept years ago, so many little boy, red-cheeked winters ago under thick blankets, drinking hot chocolate, dreaming about snow monsters and vowing I'd never leave.

"Now now, my little man, don't you cry. Big boys don't cry."

I wiped my face and ran to her bedside. She was so old now, and so thin, as if she had no insides save for a pump in place of her stomach, vainly helping her to breathe.

"I can't help it, Grandma," I say, starting to cry again. "It hurts inside. I don't want to go on. None of us can survive in here and it's so cold. What am I supposed to do?"

I knelt down by her side. She raised her hand and touched my cheek. She felt so warm and inviting — just like the old days, just like when she was alive and I used to hide in her comfort.

"I can't help you, little boy." She was having trouble breathing again and I got scared. "It's not my place."

I stood up. "What do you mean, it's not your place? Who can I turn to now? Who can I trust? I'm all alone, don't you understand?" I was yelling. I couldn't believe it. I was yelling at her for no reason. My heart started to pound fast and I felt as if I was having a heart attack like the one that took her life twenty years ago. She smiled at me, using all the muscles in her face and ending up with an exhausted, tortured look. "They don't want me to live anymore," I continued. "They want us all to die. It won't work trying to go on. Can't you see?" I kicked some ashes. "They're the same ones who took my father, your son. He's buried right next to you, dammit! Oh, and you were so proud of him, weren't you? You hung his picture on your wall with the other boys, all clean cut and virtuous right down to the bone. His name's on that honor roll in the center of town and once a year they read that list and fire off a few salutes in his honor. It makes no difference, though. Do you know why? She gave me that painful smile again, and I could see her fade in and out. I reached out at the air in a vain attempt to capture even a piece of her. "He's dead, Grandma. He can't hear them. He can't see them. There is no heaven. There is no hell. There's just these empty ruins left. I live in this hell now, a manmade hell he helped build and you supported with your smiles and false pride. I'm one of the unlucky ones, Grandma, I didn't die."

She held her hands out and looked at me again. "Do you want a cookie, little man? Does Grandma's little soldier want some Ovaltine?" I turned her away then, like I'd turned away so many people in my life, quickly and with no regrets. She vanished as she had appeared, softly and silently. If only I could have gone with her and explained, apologized, wished her nothing but to live in peace. It wasn't to be though, so I walked on. Somewhere, somebody still had a mind and wasn't hoarding food or murdering to eat the meat of the weak. I was losing my hair now, clump by clump, and enjoying all the other benefits that went along with the package. Oh, to be still, waiting for doomsday and neglecting my duties because of hopelessness. Now there was a time!! That was a time when we could look forward to things, the final, conclusive, God-awful single fate. Yes and we made our plans and counted our money and wished upon the still twinkling, still hopeful stars and told our children to wake up and march in the streets and refuse to be bullied into submission. To think, we thought we could change a thing, turn back the clock and start over again. Where did it go wrong? How come nobody told me we were losing...??

"I've been waiting for you."

I turned around in the direction of the voice. There was nothing, just the cold emptiness. I walked on, blocking out the sound of the voice.

"I'm down here Daddy. I hurt my foot."

I knelt down to look at his face. "How did you do it, son? How did you hurt your foot?"

He smiled and started to giggle.

"What's so funny?"

"I'm only fooling you, Daddy. I'm not really hurt. Mommy just kicked me out of the house."

I wish I had the house again. I wish I had a wife and kids and a yard like we used to and we could share all the love, share all the warmth.

"What did you do to your mother?"

"Ah, gee Daddy, she's just grumpy today. I didn't do nothin'."

"Anything."

"Huh?"

"You didn't do anything," I corrected him.

"That's what I said." He looked at me closely, as if I was different.

What's wrong, Daddy? Are you and Mommy having a fight?"

"No. What makes you think that?"

"I don't know. Just because, I guess. You know what happened to me in school today?" He smiled again. His cheeks were fresh and rosy and his smile was innocent like the beautiful child he had been.

"No. Tell me what happened in school today." I started to cry again, but he didn't seem to notice.

"Miss Smith picked me in the spelling bee. Well, I won fair and square really, but she picked me. It was right in front of the other kids even. She made a king's hat for me out of construction paper and on each point of the crown she put M and M candy bags — the little ones. I got to eat them all by myself too, but Mrs. Smith made me share. I didn't really mind. I didn't mind sharing and Mrs. Smith said that sharing and love is something the whole wide world should do. Don't you think so, Daddy?"

I was silent. I watched his face, his expression, his pure, unadulterated youthful innocence. I wanted to capture it forever and never let him out of my sight, like it had happened on that day.

"Daddy, Mommy told me to tell you when you got home that supper would be ready in an hour and a half. Do you want to play catch until then, Daddy? Do you want to? Huh?? Huh?? Coach Wilson says I need more practice on my overhand throwing if I want to play in all the games. Anyway, all the other guys throw overhand and everybody makes fun of me cuz I can't. Will ya help me, Daddy?"

I ran to hug him but he was gone. They never lasted for long, and when they finally get you believing they're really there and this is all a dream, they vanish. It was hilarious, in a strange way. It all made such perfect sense. It was the culmination of everything they had been working towards and reassuring us would never happen. I was learning to control my breathing. A little here, a little there, making sure I wasn't taking too much. I can remember all the Cokes and candy bars and lollipops I used to eat as a kid and how they used to warn us all about dying from all those chemicals and now this. I wonder how the rich are doing now, or the poor who used to clean up their messes. Everything hurts, every breath I take brings a sharp pain in my heart. I carry on though, you know? It's always the stupid ones who carry on and never realize when the party is over. That's the story of my life, really, the unwanted guest who stayed too long at the party, never knowing when to go home...

"Come on man, enjoy yourself!! This is a party!!" His breath reeked of cheap whiskey. I was going to get sick if he didn't leave soon.

"I'm goin' away tomorrow, buddy." He sat down on the ground in front of me. "I'm goin' to a place of higher learning, and you better believe I'll be learning high cuz you know as well as me, it ain't no fun to learn straight. You know what I mean, buddy?"

"Who are you?"

He belched and started to laugh. "Ooh, you musta gotta holda sum good shit, buddy. You don't even remember me, your old pal, Gary. I'm goin' away, man. Everybuddy's in there wishin' me a fond farewell, and you, my one true friend, doesn't even remember who I am." He pointed in back of himself and became silent. "Don't you hear them? All our friends are in there, everybody we go to school with!" He pronounced his words slowly, as if he was saying something important. "After tomorrow, I'm old news. Why don't you come in and join us, or ya got sumthin' else on your mind?" He looked up at the sky and smiled. His sky was blue, mine was grey. His air was clear, mine was full of soot and dust. What a lucky bastard he was. I thought back for a moment and realized that I did remember him. We went to high school together and he died a few years later after a particularly busy night of drinking when he tried to swim across the lake. He never did make it. They found him the next morning, all puffed up and blue like a beached whale. I hadn't thought about him in years.

"Hey pal, ya know, I know ya got moves on that Taylor girl. She's a hot piece too. Ya got good taste. I'll go in and git her for ya. You can go for it right now. What the fuck?"

I could hear them, those ghostly voices at the party. I could hear the laughter and the happiness from my dead pal but I could see nothing.

"Well, come on in, pal. The booze won't last all night!"

He vanished then, walking away from me through a crazy invisible door only he could see. I wonder if he or the others before him know who I am or where I am or if I had ever been. Nothing matters to me anymore. Nothing is sacred, (not that it ever was) and nothing lasts. I try to remember the first time I had really faced the facts and accepted things as they were, not as they should have been. I never had fun when I was growing up. That's what my real problem was. I never let go and let loose until it was too late. I never did anything before it was too late.

I used to collect things. Books, records, newspapers, bottlecaps, anything I could fit into the space I had. I put my whole life into those collections. I alphabetized, categorized, and sized up things from every angle. Nothing mattered save the fact that I had the most of this and that and every issue of a magazine I never read, or every copy of those fat Charles Dickens books I'd carry around to impress everybody and never open the covers. They'd sit on my shelves and collect dust while I was content to own them but never read them.

I threw everything away eventually, but I kept the books up on my shelves, looking so pretty and unused. I used to imagine a book of my own right up there with Dickens or Twain but it was never to be. I never did what I wanted with my life. I used to get caught up in all the metaphysical bullshit they taught me in college and I saw myself as so much better than the others because I knew nothing was constant, permanent, or forever. I was so wise! I was so impressive!! I wasn't a competitor, I wasn't a capitalist pig. I was Ganghi, Thoreau, and Martin Luther King, Jr. — all in one impressive package. Angels sang songs for me and the whole world watched when the pretty boy walked by.

Maybe I deserved this. Maybe the whole world deserved this because we gave peace a bad name and didn't listen to our leaders when they warned us about the other guys. I don't think that much anymore about the old days because it gives me a headache on top of the one I already have. I probably should have done that all along, not think, that is. Thinking gets you in trouble. Contemplating and reasoning and reaching conclusions only gets you a punch in the face for your troubles. It's not worth it...

"Where are you going?"

Once again I stopped to see who was talking.

"What are you looking for?"

It was a woman I'd known a long time ago. She used to play piano in the apartment under me before I was married and I could still hear her if I tried hard enough. She had two children from her first marriage and one from her second. She was one of the first to go, I think. She just couldn't survive. The apartment house was empty when everybody ran to their respective useless shelters but she had refused. She stayed behind with her children and put on one of those ridiculous silver saran wrap suits they used to sell in the fifties, guaranteeing safety from anything and everything. She was one of the last faithful, the last confident, convinced that she'd survive it. She always used to talk about the "New frontier" space race in hushed reverent tones, as if she were in church. She was sure she'd live on the moon. I felt bad for her and tried to explain the situation as I saw it, but she wouldn't listen. She'd have no criticism of her government, her daddy God Almighty. The day after it happened I found her body along with the instrument of her death. She had poisoned herself.

"I'm talking to you, sir. Where are you going?"

"I don't know, ma'am," I responded quickly. "I'm just going, that's all. I'm looking for some light."

"Well, look no further, darling. The light is here. The light is speaking. You've come home."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean there's no use worrying your handsome little head over finding food or shelter or protection from the fallout. It's all a game anyway."

"Why do you say that?"

"Why? Darling, you should know why. I mean, you're a cute one, but you're so darned gullible. Just look at me. I haven't a scratch. I'm okay. Nobody enjoys a good joke better than my husband Bobby, and..."

"I thought his name was Frank."

"Darling, Frank and I are yesterday's news. He took off with some cheap little number a while ago and before I knew it, Bobby and I became lovers. God, it was beautiful," she said, more to herself than to me. "Would you like to meet him?"

"No," I said. "I've really got to get going."

"Well, suit yourself, darling. I can't see why you're in such a big rush. You've got plenty of time. You've always been so uptight, but for the life of me I can't see what the problem is now. Why don't you just sit down with me? We can have a drink, and I'll serenade you with my piano. I'll play something real soft and mellow for you, okay? How about it?"

She started to fade away then. I had almost thought she was for real. This loneliness was getting hard to handle.

"I'll go fix us a drink, darling. Now don't you run off on me. You're a sly one but not too quick for me."

She vanished and once again, like always, I was left alone. Well, so be it. I walk on again, not looking back, not looking sideways, just looking ahead to the dark grey nothingness.

I used to have a recurring dream when I was a child in which I'd wake up, get dressed for school, and start walking towards the bus stop. For some reason I knew something was wrong. I searched my pockets. I had forgotten something. I'd rush back and search my room. Satisfied, I'd pick up what I'd forgotten and be on my way. But something stopped me again, and I had to run back and pick up something else I'd left behind. I wasn't prepared. I was always forgetting something. The dream would scare me because sometimes I'd find myself acting it out in real life, forever running home to retrieve what would never stay with me. I wasn't even prepared now, the worst fate possible having already occurred and here I was trying to find something that was still alive and not just playing some sick trick on me. It was like that book I had when I was a child in which the bird who had fallen out of his nest searches everywhere and everybody asking "Are you my mommy?" It felt like a knife slowly twisting through my heart because I knew there were no mommys left, or daddys, sisters or brothers for that matter. I was searching for nothing, but still, I searched...

"Will you take me home now?"

It was another boy this time, older than the first. He had a tired, exhausted look on his face, as if he'd been beaten to the last inch of his life, but like me, he kept going.

"Where do you live?"

He laughed, a bitter, hopeless sounding laugh. "You're kidding, aren't you? Tell me you're kidding."

"Where do you live," I asked again.

He walked on ahead of me. "I'm sorry I troubled you, mister," he said sarcastically. "It's just that I figured you knew what I was talking about. If you don't want to help me, I can just as well handle things on my own."

"Aren't you the wise one, huh? What's your problem?"

He looked at me incredulously. "Where have you been, man, dead? Take a look around you! It's the big boom effect live and in person. It happened, pal; what are we going to do?"

So he was alive.

"Are there any others?"

He nodded his head. "I wouldn't exactly call them alive, though. They're all so crazy I just couldn't stay there anymore. It was like living in a horror movie."

"What makes you think I'll take you home?"

"Well, this is going to sound really stupid, but," he stopped for a moment, biting his lower lip and looking at the sky. "You see, there was this one man in our village, I guess you'd call him the town wise man, and he told me that when the end came, if I traveled for several days, the first man I met would take me home."

"You don't really believe that, do you?"

"What else is there to do?" he cried, pleading for an answer. "I mean, the only goddam thing I've got left is hope. Can you believe that? Here we are, stuck nowhere thinking of nothing and knowing that nobody will come to save us, and I've still got hope. Why? Don't ask me, but it feels so stupid. Why shouldn't I believe the man? There's nothing else to do! All I can do is hope he was right, and then I can wish it all away."

We were both silent then, neither of us daring to open our eyes and confront the truth. We stood still, like two frozen trees, trying desperately to save as much time as we could.

"I can't help you," I said finally, trying to erase any sense of responsibility I might feel for him in the future. "There's nothing I can do." I walked away again, never daring to look back.

A few moments later I heard his voice. "I knew you wouldn't help me," he yelled from behind. "This whole toilet bowl world was full of greedy bastards just out for themselves. That's why it happened, because of people like you. Why did I even think you'd care?"

As I walked quickly, and then began to run, I could hear him chasing after me, breathing hard and quick. "You'll remember me," he yelled. "You killed me, you and every other bastard from your generation. You wanted it this way. I hope you're satisfied."

I couldn't believe it. I turned around to yell at him, but stopped before any words could come out. It wouldn't be fair to return his fire with mine, a fire that had been brewing for years before he was born, just dying for the chance to escape. I stayed silent and stared at him. He seemed so alone, so scared. I walked towards him and held out my hand in a gesture of friendship. Words had no place here in this silent world of communication that said two people cared for each other, that they could understand each other's pain. For the first time in my life I was really making contact with another person. I was really caring, and I got care back in return.

Soon we were on our way again, searching for others, but deep inside, hoping we wouldn't find anybody. It was dark and it was cold and we were slowly dying. We had no tears left, we had no grief left, so we just walked on.

—Christopher John Stephens

SALEM, MASS

Your history
I have made my own.

It makes me feel the way I do
as I walk through its twentieth
century mesh

A horrible collision of time
But as my sisters that I may have
never had in blood were then only
black buoys on the sea

submerging in their deaths as they
rose,

I wear wings that sprawl over this
city,

boasting in pride.

That is why I come here...

—Carla Corcoran



YOU WON'T GET ONE IF YOU ACT LIKE ONE

"Kim! Kim, Daddy wants you. Now!" She sighed angrily at the interruption of her usual Saturday afternoon football game with the guys up the street. Promising that she'd return, she began the journey home, running as fast as her twelve year old legs would carry her. Reaching the garage door, she quickly brushed off the mud from her jeans and only hoped that her mother wouldn't notice the embedded grass stains. In the house her father confronted her.

"Where were you, Kim?"

"And what happened to your clothes? They're a mess!" the Mother quickly added.

"I was out."

"Out where?" the Mother demanded.

"Just out, playing football with Barry, Michael, Maureen, Dav—"

"Well, I think it's about time to come in now and no more football with the boys. It doesn't look good to be hanging around with a bunch of boys."

She snapped back pleadingly, "But Dad, everyone is there! Mrs. Hogan lets Maureen play. I'm not doing anything wrong, we're just playing football!"

"Look, you're not to go up the street hanging around with the guys again, O.K? O.K.! You're a delicate young lady now and you don't want to get hurt. NO MORE FOOTBALL!"

Mom, in her tailored gray slacksuit and pink ruffled blouse, joined in, "Go upstairs, change your clothes, and clean up!" Stomping up the stairs leading to her bedroom, her clothes flung first off her back then off her legs. Still clad in her dirty sneakers and soiled tube socks, Kim threw a rolled ball that resembled her clothes into the hamper.

"Ah, two points!" The crowd cheered.

The excitement of summer was in the air. Vacation led all the high school freshmen to the beaches. Kim and her younger sister (one year difference) were no exceptions. The warm breeze carried the aroma of the salty ocean to the sun worshippers. Rumbling waves smacked against the shore and the hot golden sand stung the soles of bare feet, squishing between toes.

"Lisa, look at the beautiful beach...the sun, the water, the sand. Oh, I love it! Hey, do you want to play a game of one-on-one basket— no, wait, the Red Sox are playing against the Brewers at two o'clock. Do you want to watch them with me?" "Who cares about a dumb baseball game, a bunch of men chasing a ball around. I'm here to have some fun and to look at the gorgeous guys!" The soft, hot, summer wind blew Lisa's long, brown hair away from her face, revealing her big, dark eyes and suntanned face.

"But baseball is fun!"

"Kim, I don't believe you. You're older than me; when are you going to start liking guys? You like stupid stuff like baseball, basketball and—"

"Shut up! I do too like guys. I like them a lot! I just can't get— I mean— I don't need any!"

"You won't get one if you act like one!"

Lisa then playfully waved to the crowd of guys across the sand dunes. All muscular, tanned, and in cut-offs, the tallest blonde holding a football called out to Lisa, "Do you want to play a game of touch football?"

"Oh, ah, how do you play?"

Denis, tall and meaty, with a beer in one hand and **Sports Illustrated** in the other, lay out stretched on the rug covered floor. The television was blaring with the cheers of the crowd, cheering for the touchdown that tied the game.

"Hey, Kim, will you get me another beer? Oh, and while you're up, fill the bowl of chips—please?"

Kim, secretly engrossed in the game as Denis, was upset for the interruption, but the words rang in her head, "You won't get one if you act like one."

"Sure, sweetheart."

"How about getting your favorite brother another one, too?"

"Me, too," Shawn, Lisa's boyfriend of five years, added.

"Don't go, Kim. You're going to miss the most exciting quarter in the game. It's going to be a major upset!"

Shawn looked at Denis and then at Lisa with disapproving eyes, as though she were a bad girl opening her big mouth— saying something she shouldn't have said.

"I'll be right back with the beer and chips. Anybody else want anything?"

"No."

"No, thanks."

The game continued. Another touchdown! Excitement filled the air.

"I can't believe it! I cannot believe it!"

"See, I told you, didn't I? Major upset, major upset!" Lisa blurted out. Again Shawn gave that disapproving look to Lisa. Kim, in the corner sitting on an overstuffed chair glanced up from her knitting and asked, "What inning is it?"

Denis looked at Shawn and then at Kim with loving, smiling eyes and both men grinned. No one answered her, but she didn't care, she made her mark. Kim, running to accomplish another request from Denis, passed by Lisa and whispered. "You won't keep one if you act like one!"

DREAD

Identified by dental records.
Vincent's ear.

Flashbulbs of jealousy exploding into enormous floodlights
Lit up my soul.
Premonitions, the one you dread being alone with,
I dread being alone,
And disinherited from the average, I have no choice,
I have to be.

Suffering from indecision.
Gates of ugliness keep me out.
I'm a gardener lost in the desert.

After the show,
Diminish my glow.
Dismal and insincere—
she seeks to leave you.
Dissemblance costs.
Who am I?

Like a corpse laid out supine at a wake,
my pain is displayed to a mourner's facade,
Well-groomed to conceal the obvious: I'm dead.

Walking in a cold Boston Gethsemane.
I'm the dark horse.

—Sam Allan

YOUNG LADIES DON'T WEAR BLACK

Mother taught me all the rules
in her persuasive way.
I just wish she'd taken time,
if only just one day,
to teach me a woman's way.

Mother taught me that

young ladies don't whistle.
young ladies say please, and thank you.
young ladies don't interrupt.
young ladies don't walk with a lighted cigarette.
young ladies don't take the last pastry on the tray.
young ladies sit with their legs crossed.
young ladies don't accept costly gifts from men.
young ladies don't wear white shoes before Memorial
Day, or after Labor Day.
young ladies don't swear.
young ladies arrive late to make an entrance.
young ladies speak softly.
young ladies don't kiss on first dates.
young ladies don't wear black.

—Marilyn M. Chenelle

CALL MY NAME

When there's a stir
in the air—
Pressure
all around—
When the cold ground
freezes
the misty grove—
Call my name.
I'm always near,
ready to land
by your side.
When the light
goes out
and your imagination
runs wild—
Ghostly shadows
loom in your path—
a voice calling
from beyond;
Cleaning time
for the little ones
of the bookcase—
Call my name,
turn around,
I'm standing there.
If the
old muses
have left you
to play tag
on the wind—
Cold tea
and blank pages
stare up at you—
If words seem to hide;
the well has run dry—
Call my name.
I'll sing to you.
If misgivings and fears
come to rest
in your eyes—
insecurities and frustrations
running wild within—
If the fruits in the basket
don't seem ripe—
Call my name.
I breathe
for you...

—Charlene Cortes

IN THE NIGHT

I watched a woman join
with the wild

and saw her wings.

I heard the voices of the
crowd coming out into
the darkness as they
censured her pride
with crosses held
to their chests.

"She is a witch.
Condemn her to
die."

It was clear to the
maiden sitting
silently in the
tree and
to the god that she would
soon be to see,

if there were a
witch present, she
was not beneath
the black hooded
cape,

or joining with
the wild.

In the eyes of those
who condemned her
I saw inverted
crosses...

—Carla Corcoran

CHANGE OF FORTUNE

His face was illuminated momentarily, when the match ignited. The deep eyes, prominent nose and heavy creases all glowed briefly in the sudden light. The silhouette of his face seemed to hover there momentarily, although he was now walking onwards. His thick navy pea jacket was warm in the crisp night. The side of his mouth tightened briefly, as the sharp pain fired his stomach again. He drew heavily on the cigarette and exhaled, aggravating his sore throat.

He knew his body couldn't take this abuse much longer. God, only a month ago he wasn't even smoking; that was when he had met Mona. He often thought what an absurd name, as though someone had plucked it from a baby's babbling. He had never heard the name before, nor did he ever want to hear it again. That brought him back to when he was selling boxes. Not just regular boxes, these were corrugated containers — that is, before you sold them — then afterwards they were just boxes again.

He had left the South side early that morning. He hadn't sold any new accounts, but he had renewed four. Not bad, still he wished for a change of fortune. The other salesmen would be hard pressed to beat him in today's market. Business was bad, and overall, he had been luckier than most. All these thoughts passed as his eyes perceived a shooting star in the rain swollen clouds. Ridiculous he thought, a shooting star in broad daylight. Potholes lined the street, and subconsciously he veered side to side to avoid them. Not paying attention, was probably the reason he didn't see the red light turn red. Not until the side of the truck filled his windshield did he hit the brakes. The car slid predictably, gliding on the slick road, nudging the curb with a profound bump — removing all but reality.

The young lady on the corner was probably not paying attention to the world either, until she spied the car coming toward her. Leaping back in a hurry, she fell in upon herself. "Damn it!" He mumbled to himself, and got out of the car to help her. "Are you all right? I didn't hurt you did I?" he said. Looking down he saw a well dressed slim girl in a sitting position. He noted no emotion passing her face. She asked simply, "Can you help me up, please?" He obliged, holding her arm and noting she was heavier than her appearance let on. Now, face to face, her features were angular, but quite attractive. Her dark eyes now showed she was annoyed over the course of events. He probably would have continued to gaze at her and apologize, but a loud horn interrupted his concentration. His car was blocking the street and the light was green again. He was off balance moving toward the car as he yelled, "Hold on a minute, I'm just gong to move my car!"

He moved his car and got out again, but she was gone. "Now where did you go?" He quired the bus stop bench and felt foolish. Turning, as he got into his car, he looked across the street and there she was, standing in a phone booth holding her shoe in one hand and dialing with the other. Slipping through the traffic with precision and arriving breathless at her side, he could only think of, "Are you okay?" She spoke into the phone, "Yes, that's right, thank you," and hung up. She turned now fully facing him, shoe still in hand and holding onto the phone display to keep her stocking foot off the damp pavement. She spoke slowly, now in control again. "Yes, thank you; it's just my shoe. It's not quite right you see; the heel has become unattached." She held up a high heeled shoe, the long spiked heel hanging by a tail of leather. "I'm sorry. Did I do that? I'll pay as an expression of sorrow." He took a closer look at the shoe, noting the fine make and designer pattern on the lining. She watched him, eyes wide with just a wisp of a smile itching across her face. "It's all right," she glanced out to the traffic. He thought quickly, "Can I give you a lift? I mean, I kinda caused all this." She said, "Well, I just called a taxi; are you going near the North end?" "Sure, sure!" He gasped.

He dropped her off at the market and invited her out that evening, which she accepted. They had dinner at the Scotch and Sirloin that night. He did most of the talking and was comfortable with that. She asked about his family and he explained there were none to speak of — only his father and they hadn't spoken to each other in ten years. He summed it up by saying he was one of the last nomads, never in one place too long.

The dinner was excellent, and the drinks were sipped quickly. She got up to telephone a friend to inquire about a used car someone was selling, and returned to say the car was sold. After paying the waiter, they departed. He asked if she would like to stop for another drink. She responded by smiling and saying, "Wouldn't you rather come over for a drink?" He almost laughed over the cliché but managed a "Yes." The streets were narrow and she explained that he had to park far away because parking spaces were nonexistent. As they walked, he noticed plenty of parking spaces. He only hoped that he would be able to find his car later. His sense of direction kept telling him he was walking in circles. Finally, she explained that the apartment was new and she had lost her way. "I knew it!" he thought. "Women's lib stuff!" "Didn't want to admit to being lost."

The stairway was dark and narrow — didn't look much like an apartment house. She stopped and let him bump into her; he started to apologize, but the space between them was gone. Face to face, perfume strong in his nostrils, he went for a sampler. Their lips met only briefly and was prompted by a hard squeeze on his thigh. He pulled back, as she was moving away smiling. He heard something behind him, and felt a thud on his head — seeing the world blur and go out.

He couldn't move; he was strapped in! Noises all around beeping constantly, and a sucking and whoosing sound. He felt a pressure in his throat, feeling it completely filling his throat. But he was breathing in spite of it, or governed by it. It was awful — this sensation of breathing involuntarily. He tried but he couldn't fight it, it was too strong and it hurt to fight it. His eyes were useless; he couldn't focus them. "Wait a minute!" Dots, lights, the ceilings of a room, but what kind of a room?" Then a nurse's face hovered over him. She was middle aged with a kind face. She was saying

soothing words, and stroking him gently. He soon fell back off to the land of Nod. The doctors took the tube out of his throat.

The next day he was asked questions and poked about. They asked, "What kind of a drug did you inject yourself with?" He said, he didn't do anything of the kind. "I was just going to ask you what happened?" "Last I remember I was kissing a girl!" "Yes, we heard what happened to her; that's all for now." "By the way, you have visitors." They went out single file, a Mother hen and her chicks.

When opening the door to leave, he could see a policeman's sleeve outside the door. Now he began to panic. He yelled, "Now wait a minute, what the hell is going on here?" Two men entered. "Anderson Little suits," he thought, "on sale too!" "We have come to ask you some questions, sir," the short, fat one said. They started with telling him his rights and listened impassionately as he objected. "I've done nothing!" he told them. Every word was scrutinized, as they scribbled furiously in their books. From dinner to kissing the girl, and that's when it ended. They probed him for more. "I don't know what happened, but I just want to get back to work." "I have nothing more to say!" They scowled at him and the tall one asked, "Would you like a lawyer?" They continued. It seems he was found in his car with a dead girl in the trunk. She had been tied up and beaten, face and throat cut up, finger tips cut off, and her face beaten with a hammer. He was found with blood all over him, the hammer and knife with his prints in the back seat. They also found a quantity of heroin and syringes on his possession, and it was an overdose that nearly killed him. They gave him the impression he would have been better off dead. They asked him where he had bought the heroin. He was scared now, his heart pounding, and he could only manage, "I can't think now, please!" They left, asking if he wanted a lawyer. He nodded, not even looking up.

The lawyer arrived later that afternoon and listened to his story. Afterward, he asked him to describe the girl he had met; he only shook his head. "You know, they haven't been able to identify that girl you...I mean they found in your trunk. Her fingertips were removed. Now they can't trace the identification through the fingerprint bank." "The whole bone structure in her face was altered in such a way that pictures and dental records will be difficult." He paused, "It doesn't look good for your story." "What makes it worse is this, it's an election year; your case got a lot of publicity. Friends will be expensive. If you have some money, I can probably get you off on involuntary manslaughter and under the influence of a drug." The words droned on. The lawyer's face got over focused and the sentences and probabilities echoed off the walls of the small white room. Listening became difficult; on his face and neck he could feel thousands of needles gently pricking him.

The hospital was quiet at night, although inside he felt as if he was boxing again and getting badly beaten. Yet, the crowd was screaming for more blood. How could he get himself out of this? "Did I do it?" He could call his father except, at seventy-eight and retired, the shock would probably kill him. The police said he did it. He didn't know. Did he? Maybe he was blocking it out? The doctors said that he should have never survived, but luckily, for him, he had partially missed the vein when injecting the heroin. A slowly dissolving abscess in his arm had developed and the doctors had to remove the muscle around it. If he had absorbed it all, he would have died. But he hadn't died. He somehow knew he couldn't have injected himself, no matter how willing he was. Why he couldn't even give blood! He had tried twice and fainted before they even got him on the table. The sight of needles really scared the death out of him. But that was nothing compared to the fear he was feeling now.

It had been four weeks since he arrived at the hospital and things had only gotten worse. The blue shirts remained watching the door, and waiting outside like grim reapers. Knowing that the night nurse was coming in soon, he thought of an idea. He lay down and awaited her arrival. She took his blood pressure and looked quickly at him, and took it again. He rolled his eyes and gurgled. He said he felt fine, just barely making the words audible. She told him to be still and left. "Phase one completed," he thought. He listened to the words outside the door to the man in the blue shirt. His condition had now changed dramatically; he held his breath as the shadows under the door moved away. Both of them! She was off to call the doctor and the blue shirt was off to call the station. With a clever smile, he moved quickly taking the rolled up towel from his armpit, where it had been stopping the flow of blood. His arm was asleep, as he grabbed his clothes and slipped out down the stairs. In the parking lot he found an open car and changed.

The night air seemed purer, purer than ever before. Now what next he thought? How could he track down a woman that the police said he killed and he knew framed him for a murder of her own. He really knew nothing about her and everything she told him was probably a lie. "Why him," he thought? He remembered her signet ring had an "M" on it. But what did it stand for? Could it be Mona? Then again, could it be Mary? Marleen? "Was there no end to the possible lies?," he thought. He hotwired the car and drove. He pumped the brakes to stop and they squealed and vibrated slightly. "The shoes must be down t the metal," he thought. "Wait a minute, the shoes!" "I think I've got it!" He found a yellow pages and tore out some pages at the phone booth.

The midday sun was bright; it hurt his sleepweary eyes as he watched the storefront from his car. This had to be the place. He remembered the lining of the shoe as she held it up while talking on the phone. The design was the Gucci pattern. He thought, "Big bucks; she's not about to throw those out." "She'll get it fixed and by the amount of damage done, he doubted if she could get any shoe repair shop to do it. They probably cost her a few hundred so she

would go to a first class shoemaker — the old world kind who were few and far between.” There was one left in the city, according to the yellow pages, and this was it. He had figured four weeks was a long time, but it was worth a phone call. He had gotten lucky. He presented himself as her boyfriend on the phone, asking about a repair on a Gucci high heel shoe. The polite voice turned angry, “I told her if she wanted it done right I had to order the exact leather to match! I told her this morning, and I’m telling you, it’s finished! Come and pick it up!” Click, and the phone hung up. He waited and watched the front of the store.

At one o’clock she arrived in a taxi. The taxi waited outside as she went in and out in a flash. He intended to follow loosely at a distance, but this proved to be a difficult task. The taxi driver was an expert in running lights and cutting people off; he had to follow closer. She got off at the Townline Motel on the outskirts of the city. He waited in the car, watching to see what cabin she would go in. He parked the car and swallowed hard, his throat still sore from the hospital tube. He spied the white hard hat in the back seat, put it on and walked towards the cabin. “What if she wasn’t alone? What if it wasn’t her?” He thought, “Well, I’m already up for murder, grand theft auto and escaping from police custody. What’s a little breaking and entering?” He knocked on the door with authority, short hard raps. A female voice asked, “Who is it?” He kept his face down concealed by the white hard hat. He saw the curtains on the window move slightly, “Gas Company, Miss. Sorry, we have a leak in the area; you have to evacuate.” The door opened a crack, he kicked it hard and it flew open sending her flying in the air.

He shut the door behind him and grabbed her by the throat, before she could scream. It was her all right! “Hello, Mona,” he said. “I don’t know you,” she gasped - his right hand tight on her throat. “Yes, you do,” he said as he tightened his grip. Her eyes rolled and she blacked out. “Oh God, I killed her!” he thought. But no, her eyes opened again, a little glazed now. Her face was pale; he maintained his grip a little looser. “Why?” he demanded. “Why?” She smiled, “She was causing a lot of trouble.” “Why me?” he asked her. “No particular reason. You didn’t have a solid past, no family and you told me about the Vietnam treatments.” His grip tightened as she gasped, “It wasn’t my idea, believe me!” “Who’s idea was it?” he asked. “Call information, ask for the Mob or the Mafia. They’ll connect you!” She paused, “You can’t win you know; everyone is bought and paid for. If you let me go I’ll help you get out of the country.” She squirmed under his grip a little. “No, tell me why she was killed.” “She made a deal and wanted to change it,” she said. “What kind of a deal?” his voice was getting louder. “She was being paid to have children, paid well I might add. Then they were to be adopted by very anxious couples that wanted them.” “So, what happened?” he demanded. “She had a change of heart, which was okay, but she wanted her children back and threatened to go to the police. We got \$100,000 a baby and we couldn’t just ask for them back. I mean these were influential people. She rocked the boat and she had to go.” “I was just the patsy, right?” His teeth clenched. She nodded once in answer.

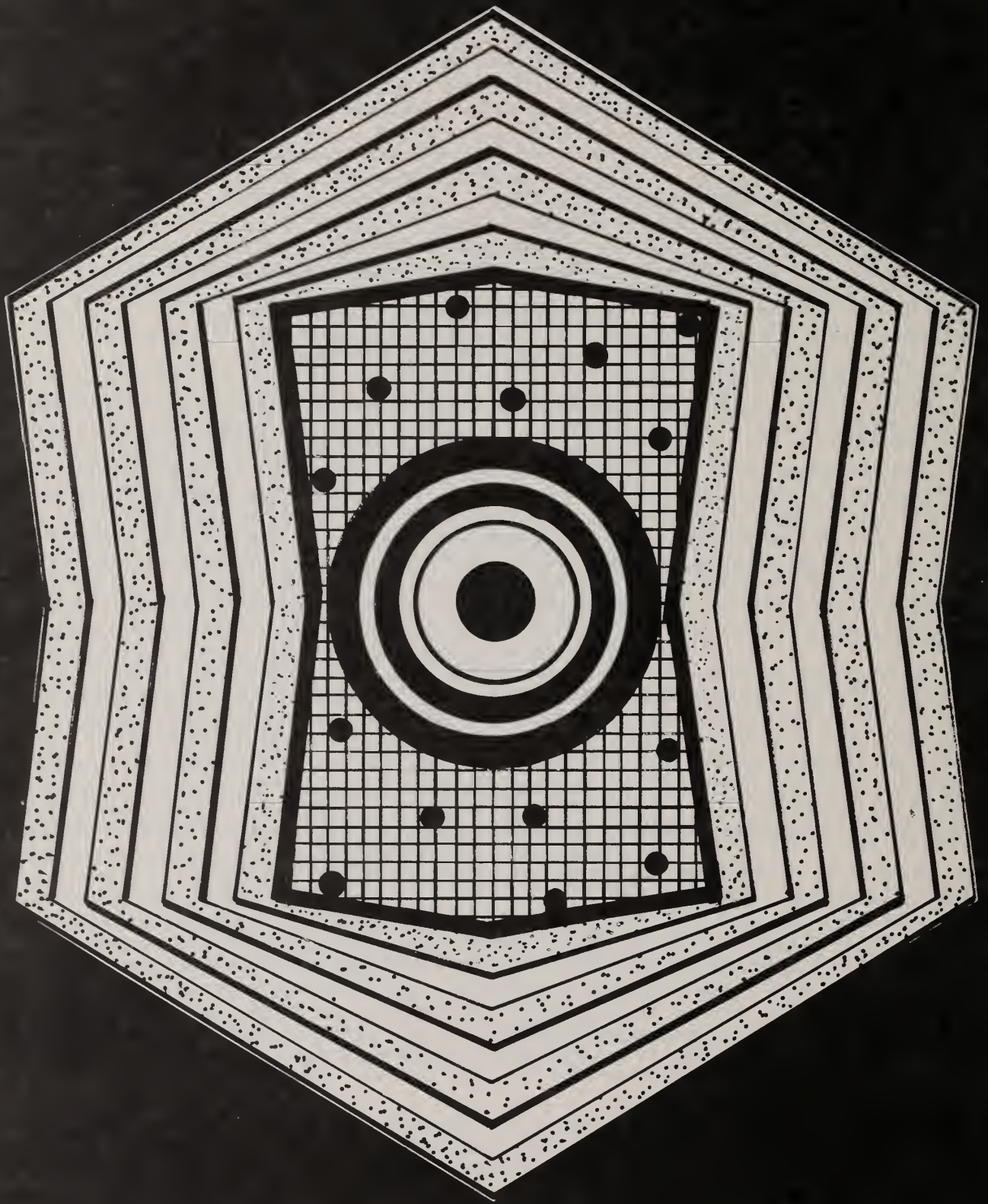
A knock on the door deadened the air. She screamed for help before he could cover her mouth. The knocking on the door turned to pounding and yelling. He panicked, and hit her face, twisting her head in an unnatural way. A face at the window, a gun butt breaking the glass. He sprinted the ten feet to the curtained picture window and cannon balled through. The sound of breaking glass filled his ears. Just like in the Army, he rolled from the ground and ran zig zagging through the parked cars heading for the woods. He heard shots, but the sting never came. He never looked behind. He ran through the woods to the expressway on the other side. It took him over half an hour to get there. Luckily, he got a ride — fairly quick too, from an old geeser in a pickup truck. Still catching his breath, he thanked him profusely for the ride. The old man just nodded and drove along, humming to the country music on the radio.

The panting rider figured fifteen minutes to the downtown exit. Now, at least, he had an explanation for this mess and he’d go straight to the cops. His ears faintly heard the news as it came on the radio. The announcer heralded a new development in the horrible mutilation murder case. It was reported that the escaped suspect broke into a motel cabin and killed another girl by breaking her neck. Police almost caught him, but he escaped through the woods. A laundry lady had alerted the police after seeing a man dressed with a hard hat kicking down a motel door. Police reported that the killer had not had time to mutilate her body. In fact, the suspect just barely got away in a dramatic fashion avoiding a hail of bullets. The announcer promised to keep the audience posted and went on to the weather. All the hitch hiker could think of was the peculiar angle of her head when he hit her — the odd expression frozen on her face. Everything faded, her face, dead, broken neck. It was the police who fired at him, not her gang. They witnessed him running out of the motel cabin. The old geeser spoke, “Here’s the exit son.” “Thanks,” he said and got out.

He wandered through the busy streets aimlessly, using the last few dollars he had. He bought a bottle of Scotch and Camels, devouring the Scotch greedily. The harshness of the alcohol burned his throat and revived an old ulcer. He thought back on all that had happened, cigarette never leaving his mouth. He buttoned the top buttons of the navy pea coat. With the alcohol at it’s peak, he stood on the railing of the bridge looking down. The wind was strong, biting at his face. Looking at the darkness below, his periferal vision could see the cars slowing to look at him. Cars beeping, people yelling words that were muffled out by the whistling winds.

He gazed at the unknown void below. Twinkling blue lights in the corner of his eye were coming up the bridge. A jacked up candy apple red Chevy pulled up close. A punk with greased down hair and leather jacket leaned out the window and yelled, “What’s stopping you, Chicken?” He made the sign of the cross and made the first step.

—Michael Recupero



"THE ESCAPE"

I sat at her table of old gingerbreads
and cold teas
while she sat and watched me

at a place where I would lust at blankness
and the feeling of the dark.

The witch sat drugged by candlelight
and stark.

She would laugh in her loneliness
and die by night.

I was the only meaning she had left
and she was mine for the time.

While the fumes from the pot
would cower in her nostrils, she
would spin and dance about the room,

fall into a chair and pride herself
for concocting such a fall.

She would sleep,
 rise, and
glance at me with a smile.

This Lady
 you see
would brew me in my fascination
of her and cause my own
 self destruction.

I thought she was pure and sane,
but she was just a talker to
the trees and a liar to The Sun.

Oh, how I love your image,
but I must divorce you
wondrous woman.

Only then can I love the one
outside the brewery.

I wish to touch him—
really touch him
at a table of grapes as his
hands mold me and set me free.

I wish to be able to see into
those balls of sunlight
which I block from the
pain of truth.

in our happy destruction
of life and moral.

Out of the brewery with all of
its heat and passionate
intensities

and fumes that fill the air so we
cannot breathe.

Through the light
not fighting

without you, aged witch, accompanying
us every time.

Wait!

Although I tear from the sight of her,
I think I see
her chatting to a bird.
I must go now...

-Carla Corcoran

THE LARK

Beautiful child,
Why do you cry?
Why are there shadows
in your eyes?
when all around you shines
Silver-Blue?
Who are those tears
for?
Someone who was—
or who'll never be?
Tell me:
could they be
for me?
Beautiful child,
such an old,
wise child,
When will we ever
see?
Yesterday is a dream.
Today, already gone.
What are we still doing
here?
The night has come.
We're all alone.
Why is it we can't
sing?
Beautiful child,
awake 'til dawn.
See the new day
begin.
Again we grieve
to the songs
the birds sing.
Tears never seem
to cease
When does it all
end?

—Charlene Cortes

UNTITLED #32,861

To half insane
To the other half
an experience of unexplained
mysterious happenings

A fallen cover of mosses
covering grassy meadows of angry soil
to be broken down
and added to the universe by the four ways

Flowers of death grow in my head
and you feed them, to your end
Sending them as presents

A warning I give...
Isn't pain a funny thing
so often created unknowingly
too often done with care

For the capture of a fool is wastely
a lot of proof will do little
as our existence shows.

—Chris Daly



MIRROR TREE

Blazes surround a dying beauty and
the unseen elements mourn as the sacrifice begins...

I have been tiring from the sight of you
Mirror Tree.

You were once so splendid and
green,
but marks did abide in your supportive style with
wrinkles and crevices intriguing to caress.

You would wane like a wilted flower to a compliment as
you stood in the forest lane and the ones who knew you
would admire your knowledge and grace
and they knew the greatest vanity stood behind the
toying cowardice and lack of pride.

But I am watching you die slowly.

You look bare.

You were one of the strongest in the woodland and now the wildflowers look
stronger than you.

You do not support me if I sit under you and your branches
will not hold me anymore when I try to reach your height.

Where are the elements that surrounded you
forgotten beauty?

Everyone loved you.

You inspired many dreams as I sat beneath you in summer,
sipping my wine and scribbling away at the soil.
where are you now?

Are you in the light I see ahead of me with the sounds of echoes
and cries?

Oh how true it is that the disciples of the nature Gods are
the disciples of Mars.

Murders and lovers are the same.

I see you dying out in the flame to a smouldering ash.

Oh Mirror Tree.

One cannot create light without you
or know the definition of intrigue,
but your power was in your powerlessness
by being bound to the earth and your
disciples.

If you had the power to move, you
would threaten your admirers and
your beauty would be ignored.

Sorry little one.

To stand high is only for the very young and naive,
for the ones who are hated and
the playing ones...

—Carla Corcoran

PLEASE! DON'T DRINK DADDY!

I suppose the first time that I felt the hurt was around eight years of age. I was sitting beside my Dad's bed looking at him with his face all distorted with drool on the corners of his mouth. How could my handsome father change like this every few months? His clothes were all rumpled as was the bed, and the smell of urine and empty wine bottles scattered around me was sickening. This obnoxious smell only showed up when Dad drank. "Can I have the empty bottles, Dad?" A slurred "Yes."

The candy I'd buy with the money from the empty bottles would sooth the hurt. From empty bottles I went to rifling his pockets; there I, at least, got a buck or two. He was too drunk to even know it was gone. There were a lot of guilty feelings that came from doing that, but who could I tell? — surely not my Mother. She was too busy doing home sewing for Vogue Dolls, Inc. Everyday, six days a week, she would be off to the side of the kitchen sewing doll clothes.

Her first machine was an old pedal operated "Singer," and she would let me sit on the pedal to have a ride. As I got older, I'd sit on a small chair in front of the sewing machine and cut the long line of dolls' dresses into individual dresses for her as she sewed them. I enjoyed that because it gave us time to be close with each other. There was very little time for hugs or kisses. Two days out of the week we had elbow macaroni and crushed tomatoes for supper, and Mom would always let me prepare that. At five o'clock she'd look up from her sewing and say, "Honey, it's time to put the pot on to boil and don't fill it too full or there won't be any room for the elbows to expand."

My brother, Jackie, also felt the hurt; he was always too quiet for a ten-year-old, even though Mom says she could never keep him quiet or still when he was younger. One night, after dinner, he asked, "Hey Lois, why don't you come down on the Ave with me tonight?"

"But I'm a girl; I can't go into bar rooms and shine shoes."

"Sure ya kin, you always wear dungarees; we'll just put your hair up under one of my caps, put some black shoe polish on your hands and they'll never know the difference!" Even though Jackie shined shoes almost every night between six and eight (sometimes nine) this was Saturday night and he told me I wouldn't be cutting into his business. Down on Mass Ave, in front of our apartment building, there were a lot of bars and all night restaurants. Our building alone held two bars, a restaurant, a cobblers, meat market, and a bowling alley under the "First National" and a furniture store. Shaking in my shoes, I followed Jackie through the first smoke-filled bar as he hollered out, "Ten cents a shine--ten cents a shine."

"Key, kid...over here."

"Lois, keep your head down and pass me the polish and rags." We both knelt down on the bar room floor in front of the man's feet. He lifted one foot and placed it on Jackie's shoeshine box, fitting his brown shoe onto the cradle, and Jackie started the shine — his bright eyes staring ahead. My brother had the bluest eyes I'd ever seen and set against his white-blond hair, they twinkled. He did not belong in this setting. Dad was a true Dane and I imagined him as a young boy, looking just like Jackie with twinkling blue eyes and fair hair. Just then, Jackie started to explain, "We put the polish on with our fingers because it's quicker and nobody wears any other colors 'cept dark brown and black shoes in bars. Let me have the brown rag." I watched him closely. Boy, he could really make that rag flap and snap. "Snap" around to the back of the shoe, with both elbows going back and forth like piston rods on a well oiled engine. "Pop" around to the front.

"Okay, kid, thanks. Here's half a buck; give your partner half!"

We didn't have to worry about bumping into Dad because he only drank in bars the first two days; after that, he'd bring it home for the next two weeks. Mom once gave him hell when he came stumbling in late. "Jesus Christ, Jeff, where the hell is your other shoe?"

"God love ya, Mary; Mary, God love ya. I don't deserve ya, Mary; God love ya."

"And, how in blazes did you lose your upper plate, Jeff? If you gotta drink, will you please stay the hell in the house so you won't be losing everything all the time!"

The bars were getting louder now, so Jackie and I stayed out on the Ave among the flashing neon lights and the T.V. sets blaring away in the furniture store windows. Both of us were now shouting, "Ten cents a shine, ten cents a shine." "Lois, you take the next one; you can do it. You shine your own shoes, don't ya? Just think like they're your shoes — only bigger; you can do it. Try and get the next guy who comes out of Orloffs; he'll have had a few and won't notice if you're slow."

In the lowest voice I could muster up, I blurted out to a jolly red-faced man, "Hey mister, shine your shoes for only ten cents."

"Kind of young to be out here by yourself, ain't ya kid?"

"Naw," pointing to Jackie, "I'm with my big brother. He's teachin' me."

"Well, ok, you make it a good shine and I'll give ya a good tip."

"Wow, a whole dollar — hey, thanks mister — hey, Jackie, look. I got a buck, a whole dollar!"

"See, I told ya, you could do it. C'mon, let's get upstairs and watch Uncle Miltie."

Saturday morning Jackie and I were in the living room when we heard Dad go from the bathroom into the kitchen. Mom went rushing from the sewing machine to the phone. "Hello, police, send the rescue quick!" We sat frozen in our seats for what seemed like hours. Then came the siren and heavy feet rushing up the front hall.

"Lady, you call a rescue?"

"Yes, it's my husband, he doesn't look well; you had better get him to the hospital and pump 'im out." This wasn't the first time she'd sent him to the hospital, but he got wise to her and started telling the police that he didn't need to go, and by law they couldn't take a man unwillingly from his place of residence. But this time, Mom had him; he had drank a whole bottle of shampoo for the alcohol content and could not talk with all the foam coming out of his mouth.

"Hey, Bill, will ya get a look at him; he's frothing — I think he's mad. Ya better get the straight jacket from the wagon."

Quickly, Mom said, "No, he'll be all right, get his stomach pumped out!" As they rushed Dad off, the three of us sat, half laughing, half crying, at how they thought our Dad could be mad — and how he couldn't talk his way out of that one.! Needless to say, he never drank shampoo again...a lot of vanilla, but no shampoo!

Lois Kadaszewski

LIFE...A PUZZLE

Life...a puzzle
the framework, is a given,
along with an array
of vague, shapeless objects.

All seemingly have
the same beginning.
Though the beholder
creates his own unique version.

Time, the ever present pressure
to formulate the dream,
to piece together goals,
chasing the ultimate reward of green.

Many prove, early on,
they've forged a work of art.
Still others lay idle
and seemed finished before they start.

A shameful amount
never achieve their true potential.
Falling as prey,
to the tragedies of mankind.

As others shine with an underserved
luster of elegance,
and questionable stability.
orchestrated by a demented mind.

Life...a puzzle
Is my own fantasy, or reality?
Am I equipped with the capability
to mold and shape these pieces
into a portrait I've visioned
lying deep within myself.

I feel confident, this dream
shall never disband.
These pieces shall never lay useless, forgotten,
on some cold, dark, attic shelf.

—Robert L. Ouellette



RESOLUTION

As she walked into the coffee shop she felt her throat tighten and her mouth get dry. Suddenly, she couldn't remember the speeches she had rehearsed in her mind while driving into town. Her eyes ricocheted from face to face among the people sipping coffee and eating croissants at the small tables until she saw him sitting at a table in the corner. Wearing faded jeans and a flannel shirt, he was stretched out comfortably with his long legs beneath the table and a newspaper opened before him.

Tension violently seized her stomach and for a minute she felt like she might vomit or faint. She fought back the urge to escape the situation. Taking a deep steady breath she reminded herself of why she came to meet him that day and as the anger returned it released her from the shackles of anxiety. She walked stiffly over to the table where he was sitting.

He turned his dark head and smiled at her as she smoothed out her wool skirt and sat opposite him. She said hello while studying the face that had been alien to her for almost two years. Leaning over towards her with his elbows on the table he casually slid into a polite inquiry: Did she like her new job? How was her son? Was she settled in her new apartment? Taken back by his relaxed attitude, she sat rigidly in her chair while her fingers nervously ran along the textured grain of the wooden table. She held the cool gaze from his blue eyes and answered quickly with a deliberate sharpness in her voice. She kept her expression serious to hide the growing distress she felt. His familiarity made her extremely uncomfortable. He's acting as though it never happened, she thought to herself.

A tired looking waitress who brought coffee to them asked if they wanted to order lunch. He looked at her questioningly but when she murmured that she was not hungry, he decided he wasn't either. She sipped black coffee and shifted uneasily in her chair. She chastised herself for allowing him to guide the conversation around an issue that was clearly unavoidable.

Stopping him abruptly, she spoke, breaking the paralysis that had pinned her mouth shut. "Look, I didn't come here to pay a social call. Don't you think we have something important to settle?"

Her voice did not tremble although her stomach felt weak as she went on. "For two years I have been angry, hurt, and confused. We were good friends--I thought I could trust you. I still don't understand what happened that night; how you could have done that to me. And I was eight months pregnant at the time."

She watched him wince and struggle to collect himself, knowing her words had carried the impact she had wanted to hit him with. It seemed to have taken him off guard.

"I don't know what to say," he mumbled, looking down at the table as if searching for an explanation. "I was angry with you because you wouldn't listen to my advice. I told you that you should have had an abortion; I thought you would have been better off. But then," he said, looking up at her face, "You've never listened to me."

It was not an answer that she had anticipated. She shook her head in astonishment as he continued, "I know it was wrong. I wish there was something I could do to make it up to you. I'm still hoping that we can remain friends."

She shook her head again. "How could I forgive you for what you did to me? I trusted you and you violated that trust. I didn't think I'd be able to look you in the face again and now you want me to remain your friend?"

His flinching expression was what looked like a landscape of anger, confusion, and hurt humiliation. A gravid silence hung between them as they scrutinized each other. Her hostility was mixed with fear and she shuddered when she considered what he might be thinking. She fished some change from her purse to pay for the coffee and dropped it on the table. He followed her as she headed for the door.

They stepped outside onto the walkway. Her stride was long and quick as she made for the parking lot without looking at him. He stayed at her side.

"Can't we talk? I want to straighten this..."

"I don't have anything else to say to you," she said, cutting him off and whirling around to look him in the face. "Leave me alone. I don't want to see you and I don't want you to call me again."

He followed her as she rushed to the car. As she reached for the door handle, she thought for a moment that he was going to try to get inside the car with her. She resolved to scream if he took one more step closer. After jumping into the car, she locked her door and glanced over at the passenger door to see that it was locked too. Her heart was thudding in her chest as she started the engine. She looked in her rear view mirror to see him leaving.

She felt shaken but reminded herself that the confrontation was over. As she drove to her apartment, she felt her anxiety wear down, being replaced by a feeling of victory. It felt like relief from a long festering wound. She compared it to the way she had felt after running into him by chance a few weeks earlier. That meeting had been the first time she had seen him in almost two years.

It was on the Sunday morning that she had gone to a combination luncheonette-magazine-cigar store to purchase a lottery ticket and the morning paper. As she was leaving, she walked by a booth where he was having breakfast with a girl that she had gone to school with. Feeling stunned and embarrassed, she had attempted to escape by pretending not to notice them. She could not, however, avoid the attention of her girlfriend who called her over to the table.

Her face became hot from panic as she approached them while trying to appear calm and unconcerned. As she spoke to them she could feel his eyes on her and desperately wished she could think of something witty or confident to say. She thought he had seemed pleased to watch her discomfort. Finally she excused herself, saying she needed to get home to her son. Walking home in the rain with clenched fists and tears in her eyes, she felt consumed by humiliation and anguish.

When he had started calling her a few weeks later, she was surprised. She made excuses not to talk to him or hung up when she heard his voice on the line. On one evening when he called, she found the audacity to ask him for his number, saying she would call him back. The idea of confronting him had been growing in her mind since she had seen him that morning but she was unsure that she could withstand meeting with him alone. Thinking of how he had embarrassed her that day caused tides of anger and bitter resentment to swell within her. Calling him back that night, she told him to meet her at the coffee shop on the next day.

She was relieved that she could now place the entire experience in her past. She felt lucid and strong, as though she had rid her system of something bitter and unhealthy. She embraced the feeling of calmness as normality restored itself. She rolled down the window of her car to let in the cool air and put on her directional, signalling for a right turn.

-B. Noonan



I AM

I am an ocean
a silent shore
a single mooring
an open door
a useful moment
a whole dam can of beans
an archbishop's temple
a simple sordid dream
a single drop of concrete
a mighty, mighty thirst
a whole pocket full of chocolates
a rocking, swaying berth
a heart of gold that wanders
a crying, wasted shame
a song that's set to raindrops
a whole lot of pain
an eagle in his mercy
a swift, soft, fleeting owl
a time that isn't tomorrow
a morning on the prowl.

“THROW-BACK”

What bitter-sweet memories have been conjured up since returning from my twentieth high school reunion, in Toronto, Canada. I have been away so long — nineteen years to be exact; but it didn't seem like it when I saw all my old childhood friends, and we all started remembering when...

Lillian, my energetic, independent girlfriend said, “Remember the day at the C.N.E. when we learned the value of a dime?” Some things you don't forget — no matter how many years pass by. I can still hear Lillian trying to convince my mother that we, at thirteen years old, were perfectly capable of going by ourselves.

“Mrs. Williamson, what can go wrong? We know the way, have money, have a watch, know the phone number, and are very mature. How can you ever expect us to do things by ourselves if you don't give us a chance to prove how capable we are?” She was a very good persuader. She had learned the art from her older sister, but my mother was a tough cookie; so I tried, and after much pleading, cajoling and promising, we reached a compromise.

Mother gave us a list of instructions, rules and warnings, all of which were so silly, but we pretended to listen attentively. Her last words were, “Now, you two stick together, don't do anything stupid, and call Dad for a ride home before 9:00 p.m.” I was so embarrassed; my mother had no faith in me.

Once on the bus, we soon forgot my mother and settled down to enjoy this heady sense of freedom. The bus was filled with people, standing room only. You see, the Canadian National Exhibitor was the largest carnival in Canada and only open the last three weeks of the summer before school resumed in the fall.

It was the grand finale to the summer; everybody went and spent their summer money on one last fling. We made sure we held on tight to our pocketbooks, for pick-pockets abound in a mob like this. The bus took us to the subway where there was a mass exodus, much pushing and shoving and racing to catch the next train. I don't know how mother could have possibly thought we could lose our way; we just had to follow the crowd. Everyone was going to the Exhibition. Once off the subway, we stopped to breathe a nice deep breath of air before we got caught in the masses, walking the two blocks to the “Dufferin Street Gates.” When we were a block away you could hear and smell it. I was so excited, so was Lill, but she didn't show it as much as I did.

Once inside the gates, we bought a program so we could organize our time and not miss a thing. After reading the program we still decided to hit the midway first. I loved the rides and the more they twisted and turned, the more I shrieked. After several turns on the Wild Mouse, Roller Coaster, the Mad Hatter's Teacup, etc., I noticed that Lillian looked a little green. She wouldn't admit it, but I think it was the Whirly Bird that did her in. My first clue was when she said, “Linda, let's not eat now; we'll go watch a fashion show in the Queen Elizabeth Building.” Lillian always wanted to eat in those days, and it wasn't long before the aroma started to get to her and we strolled the grounds trying to decide between tacos, hamburgers, french fries, pizza, ice cream, or all of the above. I loved hearing the voices of the hawkers and vendors screaming, “Try your luck,” or “See the amazing snake woman.”

We went in the Tunnel of Love and “tee-heed” at all the lovers. Lillian said, “I hope we're never that crazy.” Secretly, I kind of hoped I would be. The Haunted House truly was a waste of money, so phony, only little kids would be scared. It sure was great to be on our own, making our own choices and doing exactly what we wanted, when we wanted, “independence!”

Our next effort was directed toward trying to win a stuffed Panda Bear. Lill found she was more adept at the ring-toss booths, while I headed towards the gambling tent where you put your money down on a certain number. I loved the exhilaration I received when I won, and I was easily encouraged to... “Try again little lady — you're hot!” I really don't know how long I spent there, but when I ran out of money and went searching to find Lillian, I was astonished to find that she had run out also!! It was a few seconds before it dawned on us that we didn't have a dime to call my father for a ride home.

I can still remember my horror. I had done just what my mother had predicted, “Something stupid.” We decided that people must lose money in a place like this, so if we just kept our heads down, and searched the grass, we were bound to find a dime. Prudently we decided to hold hands — stick together. I remember crying, but Lillian says we didn't; maybe she didn't, she was braver than I. Needless to say, we didn't find a dime. but our rescue came in the form of a cheery greeting, “What are you two looking at the ground for?” For those of you who don't believe in the powers of prayer, here's proof — our rescuer was our minister! He offered to take us home, but we said if he could just lend us a dime that would be fine.

We took it straight to the phone booth and called Dad to come and get us. My father laughed when we told him our tale of woe, and unbelievable as it seems, my Mother didn't scold us. She said the only reason she gave us all the warning was because she knew what could happen. She got lost at a country fair when she was a child.

I think both the incident and my mother's admission of getting lost herself made a big impression on me that day. I'm still the optimist; I always think I have more money than I do, but I keep a spare \$10.00 (we've had inflation in the last twenty years) in a secret compartment of my wallet. But most surprising of all, two years ago, when my fourteen year old boy got separated from his two buddies at the Topsfield Fair, I didn't even get upset. It's in the genes!

—Linda McPhail



MY FATHER'S WEAK STOMACH

I remember sitting down to dinner one night with my family and listening to my father tell us stories of his childhood in Greece. One particular story which really fascinated me was his confrontation with death.

He was just a boy of twelve living in Pireaus, the biggest seaport in Greece. He was the only son in a family of five and had the responsibility of looking after the family. His father was off fighting in the war at the time, and my father and his two sisters worked to support each other and their mother.

One day, while returning home from work, he noticed all these officers standing around his neighborhood. Without thinking twice about it, he continued home. When he was just two doorways away from his home, two officers walked toward him. As they got closer to him, he noticed that they were carrying guns. The officers stopped him, pointed their guns at him and said, "Come with us!" Being quite terrified, he followed. A little further down the street, he could see all the other neighborhood children surrounded by officers, also with guns. My father kept walking until he, too, had joined the other children.

"What's going on?" he said very softly to the little boy next to him. He was the boy who lived across the street and was only seven years old.

"They are going to kill us!" he answered as he began to cry. "We're all going to die."

"Be quiet!" screamed one of the officers.

The officers led them further down the road and made all the children line up in the middle of the street. One boy, terrified of death, fell to the feet of one of the officers and screamed, amongst tears, "Please don't kill me!" The officer pulled out his gun and shot the little boy in the head. The boy dropped and the children watched his body become saturated with blood.

One by one, the boys began to cry. Some screamed and hushed up immediately when they saw the officers pull out their guns.

Another boy ran out of line and started running towards his house. An officer, coming down the street in a jeep, killed him with a machine gun. The children were now hysterical.

My father was horrified. He was thinking about his family and what would happen to them. "Who will look after Mom and my sisters? What if Dad is killed in the war? What will happen to them?"

Before he realized what was happening, the officer who was in the jeep, was now standing in front of the children, loading his machine gun.

"We are really going to die!" my father thought to himself. All the children were now crying. Then the man began shooting. He started from one end of the line and shot one right after another. Before the children knew what was happening, they were shot. As the man got closer to my father, a tremendous fear shot through his veins. The last thing he remembered was the boy next to him falling to his death. My father fainted!

The man kept shooting until all the children had fallen. Then he walked toward the piles of bodies killing any and all of the children that were not dead. My father was on the bottom of one of the piles and was covered with blood.

My grandmother had watched the entire massacre from her kitchen window. She was mortified to see the death of her one and only son, and ran into the bedroom to tell her daughters the horrifying news.

"Your brother is dead!" she cried hysterically.

"What? What is going on?" answered Despina, the oldest.

"Your brother...they took him...all the young boys...lines them up...and **KILLED** them."

The three of them sat and cried until their eyes would no longer stay open and went to bed.

Meanwhile, back out on the street, the officers were now gone and my father suddenly awoke under a pile of bodies.

"Oh my God! Am I dead? I don't feel dead. Wait! I can move my arms and legs. I'm still alive! How did I escape this tragedy?" He pulled himself up from underneath the pile of bodies and began to cry.

After a moment, his heart filled with hate as he began to walk home. "How could they have done this to us?" He had reached his doorway.

He opened the door slowly and walked into the kitchen. The house seemed so empty and quiet.

My grandmother was still in the bedroom and had heard the door open. She sat up in her bed frightened that the officers were now coming for her. Someone walked into the room. She was now trembling.

"Mom?"

"Who's there?"

"It's me, Pericles."

"It can't be! I saw them kill you!"

"No, Mom. I fainted or something. Anyway, they didn't kill me." He ran to her and hugged her as hard as he could.

"If I die, who will take care of you?"

My grandmother hugged him hard and said, "Your father would be so proud of you."

You could see the tears fill up in my father's eyes as he finished the story. He looked at us and said, "If it weren't for my weak stomach, I wouldn't be here today."



The little ones
are calling—
Taunting
with their
vices.

I hear a voice
whispering in my ear
“There is the one
who makes you
yearn.”

I look around
and there you stand
yellow eyes
beckoning
from beyond the trees.

I go
to you,
disrobed
and trusting
into the meadows
and offer myself
to you.

There is a
gentle gline
through the trees
reflecting on our
intertwined bodies.

The little ones
dance and sing
with a fervor
that matches
our intensity.

The trees
bend
and sway
to our
rhythm,
the winds howl
with our heightened
glory.

The elements
culminate
and release in
fairy fyre,,
then calm—
We drink up
the power.

I hear a rustling
among the trees,
the white hart
scampers away—

I turn to you
Yellow now blue.
Your inner beauty
reaches my heart.
A touch of a hand,
a gentle caress—
The little ones
begin their dance
once more.
Caught up
in the magic
we join in the passion.
The goatman
plays his flute
as he watches.

—Charlene Cortes

A WRITTEN APOLOGY

As the days fall
in,
a Christian lies dead.

A pagan rises
to touch the sky and
to cry with it, because
its beauty is far too
great to be destroyed.

The wine of creation falls from it.
"Oh, cool splendid soil—
you are the creator and
giver of life
never again will I look toward you
as blackness."

"Dry, crisp leaves and baptismal bread
soon to cover you
falling from the lady above.
Cold snow,
rude hail,
drizzling rain.
I will never complain again."

Clouds are veiling
our pregnant moon.

She shys from us tonight.
She is full and
in bloom
but tired of people
admiring her glory.
Masculine sun
which lights the
world,

I ask for shade
beyond your leafy
glade, but
still know you as

The Gold of the
Universe.

"Never turn
black on me!"

Tall and boastful
are the trees
but without vanity
uniting they are
with others through
time.

I will hold on to you
when the cold, hard
wind penetrates
me to a carnal
source.

I am sorry
my dearest loves
if I have ever complained.

I would bleed
eternally for
your life and pride...

—Carla Corcoran

BLUEBERRIES

The sun beamed off the childrens' heads as they bobbed down the dirt road leading toward their house. They walked barefoot in the dirt, the smaller of the two girls lugging a cracked wooden pail brimming with ripe blueberries. Kerry walked ahead of her sister, trailing a long stick in the dirt and leaving a wake of dust behind her. She would stop occasionally and trace pictures in the dirt with the stick while waiting for her sister Judith to catch up.

"What's the matter with you, slowpoke?" she called to her sister.

"I'm tired Kerry; you carry 'em now," Judith complained.

"Why should I carry them? You're just a lazybones and a slowpoke!" she teased.

Judith set the pail down in the dirt and rubbed her eyes with a grimy fist. Her hand left a smudge of dirt on her cheek. Kerry hastened back to her sister.

"Pick 'em up," she demanded.

"No."

"I'm bigger than you and you better do as I say," Kerry bullied.

Judith's reply was an obstinate glare.

"Then nobody's gonna carry 'em!" Kerry blustered as she toppled the bucket full of berries into the dirt, polishing them with dust.

Judith's glare became a frown. "I'm tellin' Momma on you!"

"Go on, tell her, I don't care. She doesn't really love you anyway."

"Oh, she does too," Judith retorted.

"That's what you think, but I know the truth."

"What do you know?" she asked inquisitively.

"That you aren't really Momma's little girl. You're adopted — that means you belonged to someone else only they didn't want you," Kerry taunted.

Judith's lip trembled and she clenched her fists.

"Momma once told me how she got you. She said the dog catcher found a little baby and was gonna feed it to the dogs only she said, 'I'll take care of that baby.' She felt sorry for you and you're lucky she did."

Judith's mouth dropped open and she recoiled from her sister. She fled back down the dirt road. The little pebbles bit into her feet, but she kept running.

Kerry stomped up the wooden steps to her house and as she approached the front door on the porch, she heard her Mother call to her from a window.

"You've been gone a while. Where's your sister? I've told you not to leave her by herself. You run and get her — it will be time for dinner soon."

With a sigh, Kerry descended the wooden steps and retraced her path in the dirt to where the blueberries lay scattered in the dust. She was surprised not to have met Judith along the way. She quickened her pace and strained to see along the road ahead of her. When she reached the place where they had picked the berries she called her sister's name in an apprehensive voice. They weren't supposed to go past this point on the road.

By the time Kerry reached the small orchard at the end of the road, the afternoon sun had dipped a little closer to the scoops of hills in the distance. She had only been here once before with her father to go fishing at the pond near the edge of the orchard. She called her sister's name now in a tremulous voice. Her stomach began to squirm as she wondered where Judith might be and she thought of all the trouble she would catch if her sister had gotten lost.

As she drew nearer to the pond the sound of chirping crickets and peeping frogs grew louder and echoed inside her head. Her mind had become fuzzy from apprehension and alarm. The trees were casting longer shadows now and she felt intimidated by the dark branches and the eerie half light between them. A curtain of weeds surrounded the pond and as she stepped through it she noticed the imprints of two small feet in the mud by the water's edge. The water was still and murky but she spotted something on the surface. It looked like the blue ribbon Judith wore around her ponytail. Straining to see beyond it, she saw what looked like yellow seaweed swirling in the water.

In panic she scrambled out of the mud, through the tall grass, and past the orchard to the dirt road. Her head throbbed and her throat tightened as she ran hard and fast on the dirt. She ran over the abandoned blueberries, smashing them into her feet and staining them blue.

—Barbara Noonan

UNCLE ED AND THE BEAN HORRORS

My Uncle Ed was a storyteller. Some people can tell stories about great calamities or heroic deeds but Uncle Ed made everyday life fascinating. I swear he could tell a story about 62 straight days of peace and perfect weather that would keep you glued to your seat. Uncle Ed's been gone for a long time now but I can still hear him tell of his life as a young man when he worked in a lumber camp. These were the stories he told most often and with a great deal of relish. One of my favorites began with Uncle Ed saying, "Did I ever tell you the story about the bean horrors?"--whether you had heard it or not. Uncle Ed enjoyed telling it again and again and no matter how many times he chewed it through, it never lost any flavor in the retelling.

"Well, a long time ago, when I was just a young pup," he would begin, "I took me a job workin' for a lumber company in the north woods. It was hard work but when you're young, hard work is not only good for you, but it'll teach you things you mightn't learn otherwise." After looking around to see if his little piece of philosophy was recognized, he'd continue. "In the lumber camp, Cookie was a power to be reckoned with. After all, you don't want to be on bad terms with the man that supplies the grub. It might not be healthy for your digestion. Cookie, that was what we called him -- no matter what his name, was more than just a cook. Cookie had to know how to read and write, so as he could order supplied and such and if one of the boys couldn't read, he'd go to Cookie if he got a letter or needed to write one. He was sort of Mother Hen and priest rolled into one and provided advice if someone asked for it.

"Cookie's authority was never so well recognized as it was when we moved the camp to a new location. After the last meal at the old camp, Cookie would send down word that we'd be on cold rations until the first beans came out of the ground at the new campsite. Now don't go thinkin' we were plantin' beans. What Cookie meant was baked beans. You see, back then the beans were cooked in a bean hole. It was a kind of oven made into the ground. It was traditional that the first thing cooked in a new camp was a great big pot of beans. The only hot thing to warm our bellies before the beans were ready was coffee, the rest bein' hard tack, jerkey and such other cold provisions as might be available.

"Moving camp was the occasion for hiring such new help as might be needed. The new help was sent to the new camp with the first crew out. They cut their teeth, so to speak, on loggin' by helpin' to clear ground in the new camp for the cook-house, bunk-house and other buildings. All the while the new help was on cold rations too. When the rest of us arrived, Cookie would pick out a spot for the bean hole. Then we'd commence to diggin' a big pit and linin' it with rocks. While we did this, Cookie would sit, like a king, on a nail keg with a makeshift table and sort and wash the beans. Then he'd peel the onions and carve up chunks of fatback. When the bean hole was ready, and duly inspected by Cookie, we'd fill it with fresh pine boughs and start a big fire. We always used pine because the resin in the wood made a real hot fire. By the time the fire died down, Cookie had the bean pot ready. He'd screw on the lid and the boys would lower the pot onto the red-hot rocks. Then we'd cover the whole thing up. This closed the heat in the pit and the beans were left to cook until the next evenin'. We all looked forward to that first hot meal. I can smell them beans right now for thinkin' about it.

"The next mornin' we were all up and out early. The boys would all be in good humor knowin' that they'd have a warm and hearty supper that night. The new help was especially excited bein' as how they'd never had a real camp meal before.

"Come sundown, we'd gather 'round the bean hole. Some of the boys would dig out the bean pot while Cookie got the rest of the meal ready. We'd all stand around with mason jars in our hands waitin' for Cookie to twist the lid off the bean pot. As Cookie twisted the lid, there would escape the most beautiful aroma a nose ever visited. When the lid was off, we'd let out a cheer and all push forward to scoop up the bean liquor with our mason jars. Hot, fresh bean liquor would fill the top 8 to 10 inches of the pot. The new help was always kind of skeptical, but after tasting the bean juice and findin' it to their likin', they'd dip in and drink a jar or two before sittin' down to supper like the rest of us. We'd all go to bed that night as happy as clams. The new help dropped off to blissful sleep while the old timers slept with one eye open waitin' for the fun to start.

"Along about midnight, or a little after, we'd hear somebody start moanin' and then another and another. Before we knew it the whole camp was up. The new help was havin' the bean horrors." At this point Uncle Ed would pause and wait for the inevitable question, "What's the bean horrors?" Then he'd kind of lean back, put his fingertips together and say, "Well, I'll tell you. The bean horrors is sort of like the dysentery, the flu and the D.T.'s all mixed up in one. The youngsters didn't know that you had to develop a stomach for bean liquor and it went kind of hard on 'em. They all recovered in a day or so, but we got such a kick out of watchin' the young sprouts, who were so cocky when they first came on the camp, turn green around the gills. It really knocked the wind out of 'em."

Well, the first time I heard the story, I asked Uncle Ed if he didn't think that, maybe, it was kind of a dirty trick to play on the new help. He replied, "Well, maybe so, maybe so, but all the same, it did help to weed out the spleeny ones. Besides, the bean horrors is something like diphtheria; once you get it and recover, you can't get it again."

—Sharon Maniates

RECOLLECTIONS

The stained glass ornament hangs in my window where I see it each day and am reminded of the trip we took to Provincetown. It seems so long ago, but, checking the calendar, I realize it has only been four years.

That was the first time John and I had ever been to the Cape and our first week away without the children since our first was born almost thirty years before. With three children to care for, we just never found, or made, maybe, the time to go away alone. The year our youngest graduated from college we finally made the break and took a vacation just for us.

We spent much of our time driving through the towns and backroads on the Cape, stopping often to eat at the many restaurants. When we weren't sightseeing, we lounged on the deck of the house we'd rented, tanning ourselves and just enjoying the ocean view. It was a lazy, relaxing time.

Midweek I managed to convince John to take me into Provincetown. I'd been told by friends not to miss visiting there and was determined to make this a part of our vacation. John complained about the drive and the hoards of people we encountered there but, as was his way, he humored me, and we spent a full afternoon browsing the quaint shops that fill the town. In one shop, I found the largest collection of stained glass ornaments I'd ever come across. I'd often thought of collecting those pieces but with so many household expenses, I never would allow myself such an extravagance. Now, filled with the new freedom ahead for John and myself, I decided I'd start my collection.

There were so many to choose from. There were birds, cats, frogs, and butterflies. I saw flowers, rainbows, and sunrises. I even saw one ornament with a huge windmill for a design. But when I saw the one of the church, with snow on the ground and a full moon accenting the steeple, I made my decision. I had to have that one.

As John and I walked back to the car, I chatted about my new treasure. I told him that the church scene had reminded me of our wedding day. I reminded him that it had snowed that day too, and the little church looked just like the one on the ornament. I talked on about my memories of that day, how handsome he'd looked and how proud I'd been. I rehashed all the plans we'd made for our future and how bright our lives had seemed then.

When we reached the car, John took my hand and held it to his chest.

"Are you sorry now, Cindy?"

"No, never," I replied.

"Honey, I may not tell you often, and I know I'm sometimes gruff and cranky, but, you know, you mean everything to me. I love you."

John was never a talkative man and not romantically demonstrative. For him to say those words was an occasion to cherish.

Looking out my window, I recall that day and still hear him speaking. Within two months of our return he'd been diagnosed as having a fatal liver disease, and he was dead before the end of the year. I have sad memories of the months when he was sick and, even now, I miss him. Yet, I remember his loving words each time I look at that ornament and I'm reminded of the wonderful life we shared.

I never added to the collection I started that day in Provincetown. I could never find another piece that meant so much to me.

—Marilyn M. Chenelle

THE END

You see, she said.
I don't, said he.
Then why, she said.
I won't, said he.
She asked, why not.
He shrugged alot.
She looked around.
He grabbed a sound.
She sighed.
He scratched.

*(Later that night she fantasized
an interesting array of sexual
calisthenics with the cast of Hill
Street Blues.)*

Roseanne Poncelli Krantz

AN ODE
(WITHOUT THE RHYME NOR A GOOD
REASON)

dedicated to Thomas White,
instructor of anatomy

I'm the king of garbage
and I live in a sewer hole
waiting
for my turds and waste

devil dogs and twinkies
eclairs and icecream
crumble and drip
down
my
body
with sensuous pleasure
and I suck in
and swallow
every morsel and drop

cotton candy and apple dandies
that stick to my cheek
make me realize
that this gray world
would be a better place
if
in every space
one could find
such delight
in simply eating sugar

now
chemically speaking
I like best
those dreams
filled with cakes and creams
and chocolate covered cherries
and the rivers that flow
with
gooey
caramel
and
hershey kisses

but
best of all
are the pleasures I get
from tooth decay
no longer the dentist bill
to pay
nor teeth to brush and floss
so
I may be
master junky
without guilt

non-fiction: That which
you have just consumed is
obviously fiction. My real
diet is derived from the
sacraed art of "Homo Sapien
Munching-Out;" in other
words, cannibalism.

—Johanna Wulfgang Poate

TO TAKE THE WORLD BY STORM

Over and over
I fall over myself
never quite sure
which of me to bring along
and which of me stays behind

A secret I shall share soon
and many will not see or understand
even those who stand close.
The lords have been found
and soon we shall rise above the smoke
of the mundanes
few hear the true call, though
many think they have
only the entities seize the true power!

No one may watch as I play
least they think it all a game
a game of fools
full of fuel, futility and fun

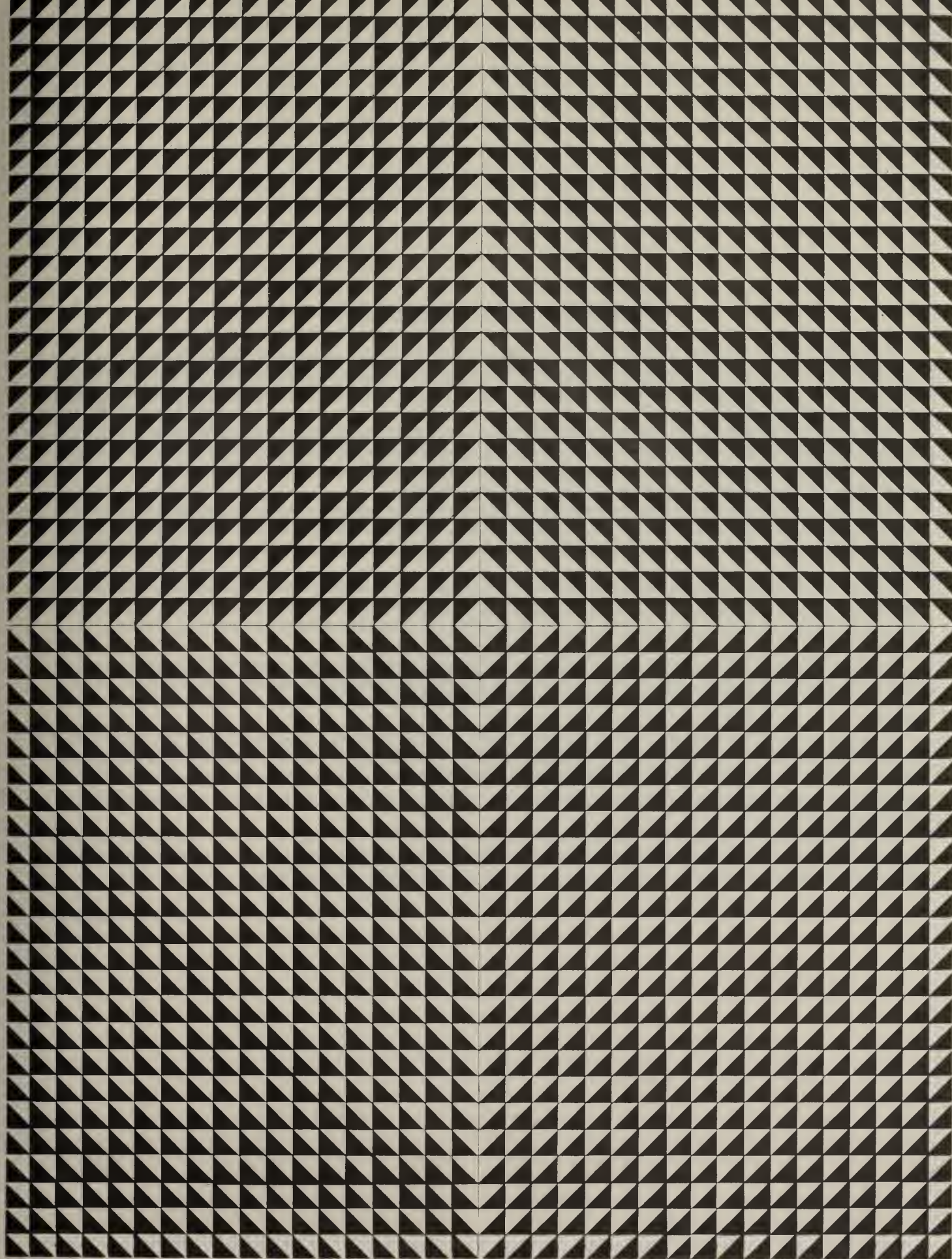
To reveal the true soul
you're never too old to cry and believe
or speak to the moon
3 circles have destinies to make and break
but make again
to see the beauty of oddities

—Chris Daly

UNTITLED #32,777

Plyacanth waters
echo in the empty caverns of my head
a thousand thoughts not said
for fear they will be understood.
My rise shall surprise even
those warned to expect it
for I don't care to leave now
as I promised once before
an anchor of creativity is holding me down
thanks above and below
now no one knows the new secret
a piece to a puzzle,
you cannot understand me now
But you shall awake one late
hour
somewhere between night and day
and it will all be clear. These words
of mystery and intrigue
carry properties of green and gold into
the mind, sold and solid
to celluloidian dreams
awaken child you can't forget me ever
though you shall try and try
your freedom lies beyond mine, that of the sky
is in choice.

—Chris Daly



MARTINE AND THE MITTENS

A long time ago my grandmother Hein told me a story about her second stepmother. Gram adored her mother who died when Gram was only eleven years old. No stepmother could take her mother's place. By the time Gram's father married for the third time, Gram was a married woman herself, but she still couldn't accept his being married to anyone but her mother.

Gram's second stepmother's name was Martine. Gram would probably not have seen much of Martine had her first marriage not failed, but when she divorced her first husband she went to Nova Scotia to stay with her father and, of course, Martine. Martine, from what I can gather, was a strong, independent, opinionated woman and so was Gram. This, I'm sure, didn't add any tranquility to their relationship.

The only story about Martine that I remember is about the way she made her living. Gram told the story to her children and grandchildren when they were young and impressionable. She appeared to want everyone to hate Martine as much as she did. I don't know how the other kids reacted but, although I never told Gram, I admired Martine.

It seems that she made fishermen's mittens. Nothing spectacular or unusual on the face of it, but her mittens were special and much sought after. She knitted continuously, but this was only half the story. Her mittens were highly prized as they were furlined and therein lies the tale. Martine lined her mittens with the tanned hides of black angora cats.

Martine bred and raised a great many beautiful black angora cats. Each kitten that was born was named and trained to come when called by name. The cats were well cared for and pampered. Martine kept watch on each and everyone of them. When a cat was deemed to be of the perfect size for her needs, Martine would kill it, skin it and tan the hide.

Gram loved to tell how Martine went about this — doing all she could to arouse the disgust and anger of the listener. What Gram thought was morbid and cruel, I thought was very clever indeed. When Martine thought the time was right, she would hide behind the kitchen door and call the cat by name. When the cat came running, she would club it over the head. One clonk and, goodbye kitty, hello mitten. The cat died instantly and Martine went to work preparing the hide.

Martine's mittens were the best that could be had at the time. For each pair of mittens completed, Martine received 20¢. Gram was always sure to stress the 20¢ because it seemed so little to our generation and thereby magnified the crime. I understand, though, that it was a generous price in the early part of this century.

-Sharon Maniates

